

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5751

INFO AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

USIA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 1618

JERUSALEM FOR SECRETARY'S PARTY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IS

SUBJ: GOI CABINET--INFORMATION MINISTRY ABOLISHED;

COMMUNICATIONS PORTFOLIO GOES TO AGMIN UZAN

REF: TEL AVIV 632 AND 929

SUMMARY: GOI HAS ACCEPTED PRIME MINISTER'S PROPOSAL TO ABOLISH MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND REDISTRIBUTE ITS FUNCTIONS AMONG OTHER GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS. IN SEPARATE DECISION GOI HAS ASSIGNED COMMUNICATIONS MINISTRY, WHICH HAD BEEN VACANT SINCE FORMATION OF RABIN GOVERNMENT IN JUNE 1974, TO AGRICULTURE MINISTER UZAN. END SUMMARY.

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. ISSUE OF WHAT TO DO WITH INFORMATION MINISTRY AFTER AHARON YARIV'S RESIGNATION JANUARY 29 HAS BEEN RESOLVED BY GOI DECISIONS ADOPTED SEQUENTIALLY AT MARCH 2 AND MARCH 9 CABINET MEETINGS, FIRST TO ABOLISH MINISTRY ENTIRELY AND
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THEN TO REDISTRIBUTE ITS REPONSIBILITIES. PRIME MINISTER'S

RECOMMENDATIONS WERE MADE ONLY AFTER COLLAPSE OF EFFORTS TO BRING HAIFA MAYOR ALMOGI INTO CABINET (TEL AVIV 929) AND EXTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS AMONG CABINET MEMBERS AS TO DISPOSITION OF INFORMATION ACTIVITIES.

2. DECISION TO ABOLISH INFORMATION MINISTRY WAS APPROVED ON MARCH 2 BY ONLY EIGHT MINISTERS, WITH EDUCATION MINISTER YADLIN VOTING AGAINST AND ALL OTHERS ABSTAINING. THOSE WHO ABSTAINED EXPRESSED THEIR PREFERENCE FOR RETENTION OF SOME FORM OF CENTRALIZED CONTROL OVER INFORMATION EFFORT. AT MARCH 9 SESSION, CABINET APPROVED PRIME MINISTER'S PROPOSALS WHICH IN EFFECT RETURN INFORMATION FUNCTIONS BACK TO OFFICES FROM WHICH THEY WERE TAKEN WHEN SHORT-LIVED INFORMATION MINISTRY WAS FORMED.

3. UNDER LATEST REORGANIZATION, THEREFORE, GOVT PRESS OFFICE IS AGAIN PART OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE; LIAISON OFFICE FOR FOREIGN NEWSMEN STATIONED IN ISRAEL AND FOR VISITING JOURNALISTS RETURNS TO FOREIGN MINISTRY, AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR BROADCASTING AUTHORITY IS VESTED IN EDUCATION MINISTRY. LATTER ALSO RESUMES CONTROL OF THE INFORMATION CENTER AND GOVERNMENT FILM CENTER.

4. IN SEPARATE DECISION AT MARCH 9 SESSION, GOI APPROVED PRIME MINISTER'S PROPOSAL TO ASSIGN COMMUNICATIONS MINISTRY PORTFOLIO TO AGRICULTURE MINISTER AHARON UZAN. IT WILL BE RECALLED THAT SINCE FORMATION OF RABIN GOVERNMENT IN JUNE 1974 RABIN HAS HIMSELF BEEN HOLDING ON TO COMMUNICATIONS PORTFOLIO WHILE MORE OR LESS ACTIVELY LOOKING AROUND FOR SOMEONE TO WHOM IT COULD BE ASSIGNED.

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5. COMMENT: THESE DECISIONS HAVE NEITHER SIGNIFICANTLY STRENGTHENED NOR WEAKENED PUBLIC STANDING OF RABIN GOVERNMENT. THEY CONSTITUTE, HOWEVER, RATHER POINTED COMMENTARY ON RABIN'S CONTINUING DIFFICULTIES IN MANEUVERING THROUGH SHOALS OF DOMESTIC ISRAELI POLITICS. HE PROVED SINGULARLY
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UNSUCCESSFUL IN FINDING ANYONE PREPARED TO CONSIDER TAIING OVER FLOUNDERING INFORMATION PROGRAM, PARTICULARLY AFTER YARIV'S ATTACK ON GOI WORK METHODS. RABIN HAS ALSO FOUND IT VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE SO FAR TO EFFECT FURTHER REORGANIZATION OF RATHER LARGE CABINET. RECENT PROPOSALS TO MERGE TOURISM WITH INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE, AND SOCIAL WELFARE WITH LABOR RAN INTO PREDICTABLE OBJECTIONS BY JUNIOR COALITION PARTNERS WHO SAW THEIR PRECIOUS CABINET

SEATS GIVING WAY TO DESIRABLE OBJECTIVES OF EFFICIENCY
AND ECONOMY.

6. AS TO INFORMATION MINISTRY, OUR OWN CONCLUSION IS
THAT ENTIRE MATTER WAS VIRTUALLY DOOMED TO FAILURE FROM
THE START. ORIGINS OF CONCEPT OF SEPARATE
MINISTRY WAS MRS MEIR'S DESIRE TO TRIM SAILS OF THEN
FOREIGN MINISTER EBAN BY SETTING UP INFORMATION UNIT INDE-
PENDENT OF MFA. WITH TRANSITION TO RABIN GOVERNMENT, YARIV QUICKLY
LEARNED BITTER REALITY THAT SENIOR MINISTERS DISPENSED
THEIR OWN "INFORMATION ANNOUNCEMENTS", NEITHER REQUIRING
NOR WANTING THAT PARTICULAR FUNCTION TO BE COORDINATED
BY ANYONE ELSE. END CONFIDENTIAL.
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